

Bishop of Birmingham's address on " Shall we Send our Sons to the University?"

The last day of the Conference arrived all too soon; we could not realise four days had so quickly passed.

We listened intently to Mrs. Ginever's enthusiastic address on " Imagination in Work and Play," and then came the Discussion Meeting. Mrs. Franklin filled the Chair splendidly, and we all felt we could not have our thanks to the Birmingham Committee more sincerely rendered than through her mouth.

Sadly we left the hall, feeling that there we had learnt so much, and yet wondering how we could act upon all the ideas we had received. But such a conference had inspired us, and we were grateful for all the help given us by the P.N.E.U. More than this, we looked forward to the helping hand we should again receive next year, when the Conference would be held in London. Meanwhile, we felt inspired to do all we could for our Union, and our desire was that it might grow in members, and thus in some way repay the debt of gratitude which would be lastingly owed to our beloved founder.

M. M. ROBOTHAM.

THE TEACHING OF FRENCH TO BEGINNERS.

The teaching of modern languages is a subject which is receiving a great deal of attention at the present time, and some of us feel that we should like to know more of the experiences of other teachers in dealing with the various methods advocated. It seemed to me that it might be very helpful if, through the medium of the PIANTA, we gave suggestions of methods and books which we had ourselves found useful. I offer these few details of my own experience with great diffidence and in the hope that others better

qualified than myself will follow up the subject and give us the benefit of their knowledge.

Most of us, I expect, realise something at least of the value of the Modern or Direct method of language teaching, but some find difficulties when they try to carry it into practice. We have all of us known something also of the Gouin method; but, personally, I find that it is very difficult to prevent the learning of the Series from becoming purely mechanical and a matter of memory. Many children dislike " Gouin," and it is almost impossible to do the actions in a room where other children are doing different work. Then again, the children do not take a sufficient part in the lesson themselves to make it a matter of living interest. I also found, and most of the teachers whom I have consulted agreed with me, that it was essential that the child should see the words written from the very beginning, and should learn to write French from the first. It seemed to me, and it was, I found, the experience of others also, that one learned a great deal more French, with less effort and more interest from the Direct Method, as it is worked out in Dent's First French Book, for instance.

I have had some slight experience in various methods of teaching French from the most old-fashioned way, with grammar rules in English—English exercises to be written in French, and bits of verbs and words to be learned by heart—to the modern use of pictures and Dent's First French book. It goes without saying how much both teacher and children preferred the latter. But I found two disadvantages connected with it. First, the pictures are essential, and it is not always possible to have pictures. Secondly, I found that with small children I was obliged to give a certain amount of explanation in English. I have lately come across a book which seems to me to possess many, if not all of the advantages of the Direct Method, and has neither of its drawbacks.

I have been using this book, and have up till now met

with so much more success than attended any of my previous efforts, that I thought I should like to recommend it in case there are any other teachers who are seeking for a practical method of teaching French to young children. The method may be already known to some of you, and there are doubtless many improvements which could be suggested. But I will mention some of its characteristics, and very roughly indicate the lines on which the first lessons are given.

The method is described as the Sound and Sight Method of teaching French. Instead of pictures, common objects, which can easily be brought into the schoolroom, are used at first. As much as possible of the speaking is done in French; but necessary explanations, and, at first, the grammar rules are given in English. All the names are associated with objects, and the words with ideas, the actions being done by both teacher and children.

For the first lesson the following common objects, a book, a piece of paper, chalk, a box, pen, pencil, and penknife are used. The teacher shows each in turn, giving the name in French. Then, having explained the word "Voici," if necessary in English, she picks up each object in turn, saying, "Voici?" and the children supply the French name. The children then point out the objects themselves, and show them to each other, repeating "Voici le crayon," etc. Then the teacher puts the penknife inside the box, the pencil on the book, etc., explaining in French, "Le canif est dans la boite," etc. The children are allowed to arrange the various things, and say what they are doing. Then they ask questions of each other, "Où est le canif," etc., and take it in turns to question and answer. In this lesson the verb "toucher" is also learnt. The teacher illustrates the action and the children each do it, touching what they like, and saying "Je touche le papier," etc. The teacher gives the command, "Touchez le livre," and the child by suiting the action to the word shows that he remembers the different names. In this first lesson he generally learns the names for the wall, door,

window, blackboard, etc. Then the children question each other, "Que touche je?" or, "Que touchez vous?" learning in this way the use of two persons of the present tense. When the names are thoroughly known, the teacher writes them on the blackboard. In this way the eye helps the ear, and, two senses being called into play, the words are learnt more easily. At the very beginning the children have practised the vowel sounds so that even in the first lessons they can spell such words as "livre," etc., without any difficulty.

Here I am at a disadvantage owing to my ignorance of phonetics, the study of which must, I am sure, be invaluable to the teacher. But I give my children plenty of drill in the sounds, and I find that they seldom make a mistake in the vowels, and though the consonants, which are not sounded, present a difficulty, yet, by constantly seeing these words on the blackboard and in print, they do not find French spelling very hard.

In the second lesson more names are learnt, and the rule for the plural. The teacher writes sentences in the singular on the blackboard, and the children write them in the plural. They also write answers to questions, and, as all the conversation has been quite spontaneous, these answers are really the beginning of composition. After two or three lessons, the child can write easy compositions on the schoolroom, etc. No sentences are ever learnt by heart, and no English is ever written either by teacher or pupil.

In the third lesson the children make sentences about the different objects, and about each other, and learn a few adjectives, and the general rule for the formation of the feminine, together with the form of the question and the use of the negative. The pronouns il, elle, are introduced. Sentences are given in the masculine to be written in the feminine, the direct statement to be written in the negative, etc. After the children have done these lessons orally, they read them in French, thus following the analogy of learning to read after learning to speak. They learn some fresh

grammar every time, always having the examples before the rule, and without difficulty they learn the most commonly-used tenses of a number of verbs, besides the simpler rules connected with pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs. After they have done a part of the book they also use a simple French reading book. They write compositions and make up conversations, and of course if pictures can be obtained, they use these too with great profit.

In this book there are simple sections of grammar given in English, and the teaching of grammar is made as definite and certain as possible. After using this book any child would not only have a fairly large vocabulary, and a sound knowledge of elementary grammar, but would also, which is far more important, be able to speak and write correctly about what they had learnt. The children thoroughly enjoy the lessons, which provide them with plenty of variety, and they show a real wish to take a part in the conversations themselves, and to express themselves in French.

In conclusion, I would say that the book on which I have grounded my lessons is the "Practical Sound and Sight Method of Language-Teaching" (French), by Thistleton, Mark, and Tr. Prellberg. It is not new, having been first published in 1900 and doubtless many other books embody all these ideas. But I hope that now I have given these few suggestions from this book, others may write of the books and methods which they themselves use with success.

A SEEKER AFTER KNOWLEDGE.

THE FLINT WORKERS.

A good many students have settled or spent part of the year in the Eastern Counties, more especially Norfolk and Suffolk, and as we are just on the borderline, and overlooking the Fen District, I thought it might be interesting to readers of the

PLANT to describe one of the chief characteristics of the district.

One of the great charms of this part is that nothing has been disturbed, in many instances from very ancient date. One tribe sprang up and settled until it was defeated or driven West by another. Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Danes, Norsemen followed one another, and have all left signs of their habitation, and the beauty of it is that no great manufacturing centres, with unsightly buildings and an over-crowding population have risen up to obliterate the "spirit of antiquity." The little town nearest to us, Brandon, on the Western borders of Norfolk and Suffolk, claims to have flint workers in direct descent from the flint knappers of the Stone and Flint Age. However this may be, certain it is that no other town in England can now make the gun flints and other implements that these few remaining skilled workmen accomplish. A little while ago we cycled to an old field just near Brandon known locally as "Grimes' Graves." It is riddled with circular pits, and in the Neolithic Age there are thought to have been as many as 250. These have all been filled up except two or three, and the Rock Rose flourishes on the chalky débris, but in 1870 one was opened by Canon Greenwell and found to be about 28 feet at the mouth and 12 feet at the base. It had been filled up with the refuse of other pits, animal bones, tools of deers' horn, pebbles for flaking, charcoal, etc., and when these were taken away it was found that these old flint workers evidently sunk a circular shaft, gradually decreasing in size till they reached the "floor stone," and sent out galleries about 4 feet in height from the centre. They must have been let down by hide ropes and ladders, or else have dropped from foothold to foothold down the pit! In these galleries some most interesting discoveries were made. It was as if the workmen had just laid aside their tools and would be coming back at any moment to work away again. Picks for getting out the flints, made from the antlers of the red deer were found. The horn

was broken off near the brow end, and the unused spines burnt off. They all showed signs of use, and in the British Museum there is one taken from these galleries with the impression of the miner's thumb on some chalky clay that clung to the pick as he worked. Rudely made cup-shaped vessels were found on a ledge, and are thought to have been used for lamps. Then there were bones of the long-faced ox, and of a great many young calves in the thrown-out soil, from which it is thought that this tribe looked upon milk as an important food.

The day we went there were just two pits being worked, and we were fortunate enough to find one of the miners just finishing his lunch before descending again. One miner works a pit, and the curious thing is, that they are worked even now more or less as in the Neolithic Age. We looked down the pit and saw the circular shaft, with ledges cut out on either side to the depth of about 50 feet.

The miner invited us down, but as we were hardly equipped for mining, we replied that we would rather see him descend. He *dropped* from ledge to ledge, until he reached the "floor stone." Then took up his pick (which, like the Neolithic workman, he had left below, and like his pick, had his own shaped on a pattern of the red deer's antler). He called up to us from the bottom, and we saw him depart down a side gallery, and soon afterwards heard him picking out the flints. After a certain number have been loosened, they are thrown up on to the ledge above, then as he ascends by stages the flints are thrown from ledge to ledge, and finally reach the mouth, and are piled up at the pit's edge. Carts are then brought, and the flints (which are sold by the cart load) are taken into Brandon to be worked by the flint knappers.

J. M. W.

(To be continued.)

STUDENTS' MEETINGS.

Miss McShee and Miss Bernau were the only students present on Saturday, besides Miss Faunce and myself. No matter of importance was discussed. Next meeting, March 5th.

MARJORIE EVANS.

MANCHESTER BRANCH.

By the kind invitation of Mrs. Tod a meeting of Manchester students was held on Tuesday, January 4th, in the Ladies' Club, King Street, Manchester. There were present Miss G. T. Bradford, Miss D. Bradford, Miss Courtenay, Miss Gore, Miss Norris, Miss Parsons, Miss O. Thorp, Mrs. Tod, and Miss D. Whittall. All those present agreed to the arrangements made at the last Manchester meeting.

The suggestion made by the London students in answer to the request of the Manchester students who met in November that Miss Mason should be asked to set an alternative history book for Class III. was then discussed. All present agreed that average girls of Class III. found Arnold Foster insufficient, but the conclusion arrived at was that it would be better to have a "supplementary" history book rather than an "alternative" on the programme. Several expressed their opinions that supplementing from books already in the house would be preferable to having an extra book set.

The next meeting of the Manchester Branch will be held on March 5th or March 12th.

Secretary: Miss O. Thorp, Mere Old Farm, Knutsford, Cheshire.

EDINBURGH BRANCH.

A meeting was held on January 8th, and an account was kindly sent by Miss Fischer to the Editor who is ashamed to say that it has disappeared and can nowhere be found. The Editor can only apologise, and quote from memory that some four students were present, and that this branch had a hopeful and pleasant inauguration.

SCALE HOW MISSION FUND.

DEAR FRIENDS AND FELLOW-STUDENTS,

May I take the opportunity of reminding you of the existence of this fund, which was started last year with the object of helping missionary work at home and abroad. I was able, last year, to collect £2 from twenty-eight students, and this was divided between Miss Conder, at work in East London, and Miss Smyth, who was then just starting for Uganda.

Subscriptions fall due in the spring, and will be received, for this year, up to June 1st. Any sums from 1s. to 2s. 6d. will be gratefully acknowledged.—Believe me, yours very sincerely,

EVA H. LAURENCE.

Bulmer Rectory, York.

January 31st.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

An Executive Committee meeting will be held on Saturday afternoon, March 12th, at 50, Porchester Terrace.

Subjects for discussion should be sent to Miss Franklin, Miss Gray, or the Editor as soon as possible.